

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 0516

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV PBOR MILI ET SO CU
SUBJ: FONMIN MALMIERCA COMMENTS ON CUBANS IN AFRICA

1. FOLLOWING REPORT WAS DRAFTED BY CHIEF USINT PRIOR TO
HIS DEPARTURE FOR COM MEETING.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER MALMIERCA CALLED ME IN ON SATURDAY
AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 25, IN CONNECTION WITH A CONSULAR CASE.
FOLLOWING A DISCUSSION OF PENDING AMCIT REPATRIATION CASES
AND POLITICAL PRISONERS (SEPTEL), I THEN TOOK OCCASION TO SAY
THAT SINCE I WAS LEAVING FOR WASHINGTON, AND GIVEN THE
FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED U.S. CONCERN ABOUT THE CUBAN MILITARY
PRESENCE IN AFRICA - AND MOST RECENTLY IN ETHIOPIA, I
WONDERED WHETHER HE HAD ANTHING TO TELL ME THAT I COULD
REPORT TO MY GOVERNMENT. MALMIERCA FIRST TRIED TO PUT ME
OFF BY REFERRING ME TO MY PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH
VICE PRESIDENT CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ IN WHICH THE LATTER
HAD COVERED THE RATIONALE FOR THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA,
INCUDING ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA. THE MINISTER SAID THAT
THOSE PRINCIPLES STILL STAND.

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3. I REPLIED THAT, WHILE THE PRINCIPLES MAY STAND, THE
SITUATION ON THE GRUND IN ETHIOPIA AT LEAST HAS CERNTAINLY
CHANGED DRASTICALLY AND SEEMS TO US VERY DANGEROUS.
MALMIERCA THEN ACKNOLWEDGED THAT, IN REACTION TO THE
SOMALI AGGRESSION IN THE OGADEN, THE CUBAN MILITARY ROLE
IN ETHIOPIA HAD GREATLY EXPANDED. WHEN I REFERRED TO THE
AARON VISIT TO ADDIS ABABA, WHICH I SAID WAS INTENDED TO

EXPLAIN U.S. VIEWS TO THE ETHIOPIANS AND WHICH WE HAD FOUND ENCOURAGING, THE MINISTER SAID THAT THE GOC (LATER HE AMENDED THIS TO SAY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT, WITH WHICH CUBA AGREES) DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT A CEASEFIRE IS POSSIBLE UNTIL THE SOMALI TROOPS HAVE ENTIRELY WITHDRAWN FROM OGADEN. I POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE SOMALIS SHOULD LEAVE AND THE BORDER MUST BE RESPECTED, BUT THAT WE HOPED THAT TO STOP THE FIGHTING, A CEASEFIRE COULD BE COUPLED WITH SUCH A WITHDRAWAL TO BE FOLLOWED BY NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES FOR A LASTING SETTLEMENT. MALMIERCA NODDED, BUT DID NOT COMMENT FURTHER ON THIS POINT. HE DID OBSERVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE ETHIOPIANS HAD SAID THEY DID NOT INTEND TO CARRY THE FIGHTING ACROSS THE SOMALI BORDER, AND CUBA SUPPORTS THIS POSITION.

4. I THEN ASKED WHETHER WE COULD EXPECT THAT ONCE THE OGADEN SITUATION HAD BEEN SETTLED AND THE BORDER WAS SECURE, CUBAN FORCES WOULD BE WITHDRAWN. MALMIERCA RESPONDED WITH A DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES OF THE GOC TO HELP ETHIOPIA PRIMARILY WITH DOCTORS AND OTHER TECHNICAL PERSONNEL, PLUS A FEW MILITARY ADVISERS. HE AGAIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE HAD GREATLY EXPANDED AS A NECESSARY RESPONSE TO SOMALI INCURSIONS, AND SAID THAT CUBA MUCH PREFERRED TO RETURN TO ITS PREVIOUS COURSE OF SUPPORTING ETHIOPIAN DEVELOPMENT. WITH RESPECT TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN MILITARY FORCES (AT NO

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TIME DID HE SPECIFY THE NATURE OF THESE FORCES OF THEIR PRECISE MISSION), HE SAID SIMPLY THAT LIQUIDATION OF THE OGADEN PROBLEM WOULD INDEED CREATE A NEW SITUATION. THE CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT AT LEAST SOME DRAWDOWN COULD BE EXPECTED.

5. THERE WAS NO REFERENCE IN OUR CONVERSATION TO THE ERITREAN PROBLEM. I DID NOT RAISE IT BECAUSE I HOPED PRIMARILY TO DRAW MALMIERCA OUT ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF POSSIBLE CUBAN TROOP WITHDRAWALS ONCE THE OGADEN SITUATION IS RESOLVED. (FOR A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ ON THIS TOPIC SEE HAVANA 462.)

6. WHEN WE TURNED BRIEFLY TO THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE MINISTER COMMENTED ONLY THAT BOTH THE NAMIBIAN AND RHODESIAN SITUATIONS ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX, AND THAT WHILE DIFFERENT IN MANY WAYS THEY ARE COMPARABLE IN THAT THE VOICES OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED MUST BE HEARD. HE NODDED APPROVINGLY WHEN I OBSERVED THAT WE WERE CONTINUING TO WORK FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THESE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES.

7. COMMENT: MALMIERCA'S COMMENTS ARE INTERESTING IN THAT HE REAFFIRMED CUBAN AND ETHIOPIAN INTENTIONS NOT TO CROSS SOMALI BORDER, AND WHILE HIS FORMULATION WAS NOT CATEGORIC HE DID NOT AT LEAST SUGGEST THAT BATTLEFIELD CONDITIONS COULD AFFECT THESE PLANS. HIS STATEMENTS ABOUT POSSIBLE CUBAN TROOP WITHDRAWALS ARE ALSO OF INTEREST SINCE HE SPOKE ONLY IN TERMS OF THE OGADEN SITUATION AND NOT (LIKE RODRIGUEZ) WITH SOME AMBIGUITY ABOUT ERITREA AS WELL.
GLASSMAN

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